

# Emergency Preparedness in Wisconsin

## Results of Five Focus Groups

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for:

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## Executive Summary

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This report presents the results of five focus groups conducted across Wisconsin. The Division of Public Health (DPH) initiated these groups to learn more about the status of citizens' emergency preparedness, their perception of the role of public health in emergency response, and the gaps in knowledge regarding the work of public health in their communities. What are their concerns and what steps have they taken to prepare for possible emergencies? The groups also provided a setting for people to preview and comment on the DPH draft: *Public Health Emergencies: Your preparedness guide*. Their comments allow the agency to better tailor its contents for the public.

### The study

The groups were designed and moderated by Applied Research Systems, an independent consulting firm located in Madison, Wisconsin. The groups met in five locations around the state. A total of 44 people participated in them.

### Principal findings

Wisconsin's residents aren't entirely ready for emergencies. Although they expressed concerns about a wide range of possible disasters few had given any thought to, or made any preparations for, such disasters. They are most worried about some form of severe weather: tornadoes, blizzards, thunderstorms. In these situations they have a rudimentary plan in place: retreat to the basement and wait for the storm to pass. Some may have a radio, flashlight and some incidental provisions stored in the basement. Few have a systematic preparedness plan in place.

Residents are concerned about the possibility of a terrorist attack. Most are convinced that the United States will be the target of an attack before the end of the year. They are equally convinced that they and their communities will not be targets. To the extent that they have a plan to deal with terrorism it is to stay in their homes or to get in their cars and "drive west."

Should a terrorist attack use biological agents residents don't know what preparations the state has made and, in the absence of information, doubt that the state is prepared to cope with such an attack. Recent shortages of vaccine for the flu season fed their doubts about the state's capacity to cope with a terrorist attack. If it wasn't ready for something as predictable as flu season how likely is it to be prepared for bio-terrorism?

Residents have their reasons for not being ready. Some simply deny the possibility that anything could happen to them. Disasters only happen to other people and then only on television. Those who have lived through some type of disaster think that it won't happen again so they don't need to be prepared. Some say that they "refuse to live in fear" while others are more fatalistic and place their faith in God.

Despite this lack of preparedness we found participants receptive to the idea that they should be better prepared. They simply need guidance. When presented a template of actions they could take to prepare for an emergency virtually everyone identified at least something they would do. These ranged from learning how to turn off the utilities to posting emergency phone numbers.

Women seemed particularly concerned about family preparedness. Likewise those with children or with aging parents were more concerned and more likely to have rudimentary plans in place and to have had discussion about what to do during an emergency. A person's occupation or volunteer activities also played an important role in forming their thoughts on this matter. Postal employees and those in the medical profession were keenly aware of the threats posed by bio-terrorism.

Finally, participants made suggestions on how the Guide could be improved as well as more general comments on its content and how it should be distributed. Those not inclined to read would like shorter and more frequent contacts on this subject. Others suggested having high school students go door to door and distribute the Guide

## **Acknowledgements**

The successful completion of this research would not have been possible without the assistance from numerous people. Particular thanks are extended to Roberta Harper, Public Health Educator for the Division of Public Health. Ms. Harper's guidance and support made the research process not only smooth, but also fun. Additional thanks are offered to the local public health officials and municipal officials who helped organize the groups and identify meeting locations. Special recognition goes to Jeff Kindrai, Scott Herman, Kathy DeChamps, Al Graewin, Diane Panzer, Lindsey Schwarz, Gail Huycke, and Neil Hegman. Thanks also go to Ellen McKenzie for recruiting the Milwaukee participants and providing us access to the 16th Street Health Clinic for the conduct of the meeting. And finally, nothing would have been possible without the participation of the 44 state residents. Their willingness to talk openly about a topic that they rarely or never think about, to remain engaged and enthusiastic during the two-hour discussions, and to devote considerable personal time to review the draft copy of Wisconsin's preparedness guide is greatly appreciated.

## Introduction

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The events of 9/11 have brought the need for emergency preparedness into the foreground. Government at all levels is taking action to prepare for all types of emergencies, particularly preparedness for unconventional disasters such as terrorist attacks. Households must also take action and responsibility. They need to know what to do in an emergency. To fill this need the Wisconsin Division of Public Health has prepared an information booklet titled *Public Health Emergencies: Your preparedness guide*, that will receive statewide distribution. To learn more about the current status of household preparedness, and to get reactions to the Guide, the DPH commissioned a series of focus groups conducted around the state. This report summarizes the findings of those groups.

### Research objectives

The principal goal of this study was to first gain insights into civilian emergency preparedness. What have households done to prepare for an emergency? Second, the groups focused on identifying suggestions for how the Guide could be improved. The bulk of this report, however, focuses on:

- prior experience with disasters
- current concerns for disasters of all types
- actions households have taken or would take to prepare for a disaster
- perceptions of state and local government preparedness
- knowledge of and / or contacts with local county health departments
- reactions to Wisconsin's proposed public health emergency preparedness guide

### Focus group methodology

Focus groups consist of a small group of people (seven to ten is ideal) sitting around a table discussing a topic under the direction of a trained moderator. The discussions typically last about two hours. They are relaxed, informal, and generally enjoyable for the participants. The format allows participants to relate their experiences and express their feelings and opinions. During the meetings they have the opportunity to listen to others talk, to compare their experiences and ideas, and to interact with one another.

As a method of collecting data, focus groups have their limitations. They generate narrative rather than numerical data; insights rather than statistical generalizations. The findings from focus groups apply only to those present in the room, not to all the residents of the State of Wisconsin. For this reason the five focus groups were held in different parts of the state where the demographics were varied.

These are the standard cautions that must accompany any focus group report. Focus groups often raise more questions than they resolve. Definitive answers and statistical projections depend on the conduct of survey research. We would note, however, that certain themes and concerns recur in ways that suggest that they may be widespread. Moreover, a number of the conclusions drawn in this study are consistent with national survey data on emergency preparedness and the perception of threats posed by terrorists.<sup>1</sup> Given consistent results across the groups and comparability with national survey data we suggest that the results of this work invite serious consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example an article in the Washington Post: "Recent surveys have shown that while an overwhelming majority of Americans expect terrorists to attack the US in the near future, only about two in ten have done anything to prepare for such an occurrence (WP:3/10/2004)." The article goes on to note that people haven't taken action because "government has not provided enough guidance."

## Participant selection

The focus groups sought to incorporate a cross-section of the population in terms of age and gender. People between the ages of 25 and 60 were recruited. While we tried for a rough balance between men and women we found it far easier to recruit women to participate in the groups. In part, this may be because of their domestic responsibilities; women generally carry more responsibilities for what happens in the home than do males. In any event, more women than men participated in these discussions. It should be noted that the group in Milwaukee stands out for its unique group composition. One research objective was to seek input from an inner-city population. With superb assistance from staff at the 16th Street Health Clinic we conducted a group that consisted solely of Hispanics. The group composition differed further from the other groups by including a higher number of participants with lower educational achievement and lower income.

All participants (with the exception of the Milwaukee group) were recruited through telephone interviews. In particular we were looking for participants that fit a specific profile: people between the ages of 25 and 60, who were not new residents to the community, and who seemed comfortable having a conversation on the telephone.

Staff from the local health departments played a critical role in organizing the focus groups. In three of the five locations the local health departments provided us with a list of names and telephone numbers of people who had recent contacts with or made inquiries to their local health office. From this list, we recruited three or four participants. The remaining participants were identified through local telephone books. This methodology assured us of having groups that included both informed participants (those who knew something about their local health department) and, most likely, uninformed participants (those who probably knew very little, if anything, about their local health department).

We found it relatively easy to recruit these groups and the people we recruited almost all showed up for the discussion. This suggests a certain enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject, although we did encounter some skepticism. One group was concerned that they were going to be given a sales pitch to buy fire extinguishers!

In total, 44 people participated in the five groups. The following table shows the locations and dates of the focus groups as well as the gender make-up of the participants.

**Table 1: Locations, dates and participant gender make-up**

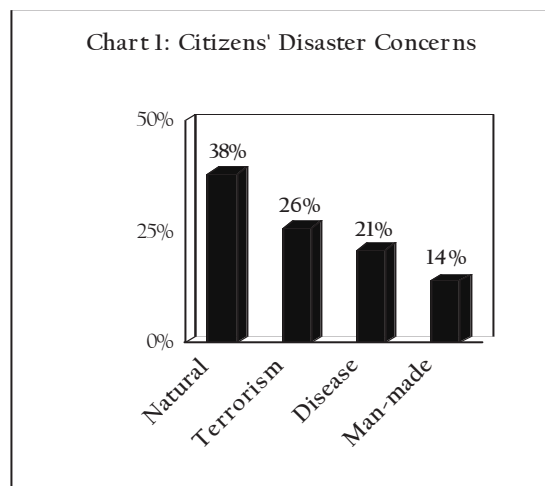
Location	Date	Invited	Participated	Male / Female
Milwaukee	May 25	14	13	7 / 6
Lancaster	June 10	9	7	3 / 4
Green Bay	June 17	9	8	5 / 3
La Crosse	June 24	9	9	2 / 7
Park Falls	June 30	8	7	2 / 5
<b>Total</b>		49	44	19 / 25

## Overview

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### People are primarily concerned about “natural disasters.”

Early in the discussion participants received a list of various disasters and were asked to highlight the ones of “significant concern” to them. This list, drawn from standard emergency guides, allowed participants to review, highlight and discuss their concerns. Chart 1 shows these concerns by categories.



Categories of concerns according to frequency of mention include:

- Natural disasters such as tornadoes or severe weather
- Terrorism including hijacking, bombs, bio-terrorism
- Outbreaks of diseases such as SARS or West Nile virus
- Man-made disasters such as hazardous materials spills

People recognize the potential for a variety of disasters. Their concerns varied according to the following:

- Personal experiences with different types of disasters
- Where they live
- Their proximity to other locations that might be targets of terrorists
- Gender
- Age
- The presence of children in the home



## Concerns about Natural Disasters

### Participants were most worried about tornadoes and other forms of “severe weather.”

Table 2 presents participants’ concerns about different types of natural disasters. Their principal concerns include severe weather in general with tornadoes and winter storms in particular. Those who had lived in other parts of the country mentioned experiences with wildfires, hurricanes and earthquakes.

Many of the concerns voiced during the group reflect where a person lives and the specific hazards posed by that location. In a sense, many of the participants have a personal list of the dangers specific to their community - flooding and fire, for example. In one case a person’s profession (fire warden) and place of residence (Park Falls) contributed to his awareness of and concerns about the potential for wildfires.

**Table 2: Participants’ concerns about natural disasters**

Natural disasters	Mentions
Tornadoes	23
Winter storms	23
Severe weather	22
Power outages	19
Flash floods	10
Wildfires	5
Hurricanes	3
Earthquakes	2

### Floods

*I checked flash floods because I lived in Mellen. My house was actually on a hill but you have the river all the way around you and every spring I’d be stuck for at least two days because the water would rise.*

*I put down flash flood. Not so much for me because I live up on the bluffs. For the community I do think of that a lot. French Island: they’re battling with that all the time.*

### Tornadoes

*Tornadoes are the scariest thing for me. There were two instances where I was involved with tornadoes. A tree came right down. There’s nothing you can do when you’re on the highway except to pull over.*

*Tornadoes are the one that scare me all the time. And the severe weather with the heavy rain and lightning. Tornadoes would be my big concern. You’re kind of helpless when they hit.*

### Wildfires

*I’m a fire warden and I’m a little bit concerned about wildfires because they’ve had some pretty severe fires. We’re just a tinderbox waiting to happen. We’re a ripe candidate. That’s what the DNR keeps stressing.*

## Concerns about Terrorism

### Participants were concerned about a possible terrorist attack.

Some form of terrorist attack was second on the list of participants' concerns. They appear to be most concerned about an attack using radioactive or other hazardous materials. There is also some concern about the potential for bio-terrorism and the use of bombs. They associate the use of bombs with possible targets in or near their communities (dams, military facilities, power plants, etc.) While it is difficult to make comparisons across the various groups it seemed as though those living in Milwaukee were more concerned about the threat of terrorism than those living elsewhere.

### Bio-terrorism

Although more people checked "radioactive or hazardous materials release" they had much more to say about bio-terrorism. In some cases their concerns were a function of their profession or their educational background. Thus, the postal worker was keenly aware of, and had been trained to cope with, parcels that might be contaminated. Likewise, a medical researcher was more informed and concerned about the possibility of bio-terrorism than others in her group.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 3: Participants' concerns about various forms of terrorism**

Terrorism	Mentions
Radioactive or hazardous materials	20
Bombs	13
Anthrax	12
Poison gas	11
Airplane hijacking	9
Small pox	7

Some think that a bio-terrorism attack is a distinct possibility.

*I think it's a very real possibility. Because of the easiness to put [something] into the stream of things with very little forethought. One person could do it.*

*I have a personal opinion that the next strike will be a bio-terrorist scenario. It's simple. One man can inflict a tremendous amount of damage. Tremendous.*

### Small pox

*I included smallpox and a bomb. I just feel that if something like that hits you have no defense no matter what. In Park Falls we're all gone - a small community like this.*

*Because I have a degree in biology I was always well aware of this stuff (bio-terrorism). That's why I listed this. This concerned me the most.*

Some are particularly concerned about smallpox because they were never vaccinated for it.

*There's an age where they cut off giving the vaccines and I'm not in that age. I'm in the age where I don't have the vaccine. For people around my age we're a little more concerned about that than everyone else because we know what could happen to us.*

Others are concerned for their children who have also never been vaccinated.

*My son was born at the time when they stopped giving smallpox shots so he's never had a smallpox shot. I tell you I was really concerned and said that he should talk to his doctor. I don't think he ever did get one.*

<sup>2</sup>A nationwide survey conducted in 2002 found that 58 percent of Americans are "very" or "somewhat worried" that terrorists will use smallpox in an attack on the United States (Harvard School of Public Health, May 2002).

## **Anthrax**

*Being a mail person, Anthrax, bombs and radioactive stuff is always in the back of our minds when we're handling stuff that comes from all over the U.S. There's a lot of nuts out there and you don't know what's in a package. There have been a lot of scares with a lot of powder. And it's just been baby powder or flour but anything white or tan could be Anthrax.*

*We've had training and we used to wear gloves all the time but it's tedious trying to handle the mail in gloves.*

**Note:** This person's workplace (the post office) was both a source of worry and of information on preparation and protection.

## **Airplane hijacking**

*Airline hijacking because what can I do about it when you're on the plane?*

*I have just flown in an airplane and before it never bothered me but now I'm a white-knuckle flier. You look at people when they come in and you look to see what their nationality is and if they're dark skinned you get a little paranoid and I think you shouldn't do that. I found myself looking everybody over and thinking, 'Could he be one?'*

## Concerns about Health Emergencies

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### Health emergencies are a significant but secondary concern.

Participants were somewhat less concerned about various health emergencies. The leading concern was West Nile virus. This was particularly true for those who live near water or in the north and/or have small children.

**Table 4: Participants' concerns about health emergencies**

Health emergencies	Mentions
West Nile virus	18
Influenza	13
Mad cow disease	13
SARS	11
Avian flu	4

### West Nile virus

While many people had listed the flu they most wished to talk about West Nile virus.

*West Nile Virus because we have so many mosquitoes up here you never know. If they bite me, who else did they bite before they got to me?*

*West Nile was one of my concerns: we have a camper down by [Mississippi River] and towards the evening, if you're not all covered up, you're getting bit. I have young kids that I take down there so we have to be very careful.*

## Concerns about Man-made Disasters

### Participants were somewhat less concerned about man-made disasters.

The handout included only two accidental man-made disasters: hazardous materials spills and the contamination of food and water. That may be the reason this category received relatively little attention. Their concern was definitely a function of place. Those who live in or near transportation hubs are concerned about hazardous materials spills. Those who lived in Milwaukee, where the combined sewers overflow into the lake, are concerned about water contamination.

**Table 5: Participants' concerns about man-made disasters**

Man-made disasters	Mentions
Contamination of food or water	20
Hazardous materials spills	14

### Hazardous materials spills

*The Mississippi River: I think of the train that goes up the river. We really don't know what's traveling. It's such a commercial route through La Crosse that there's got to be something that's scary.*

*I hit on the hazardous waste with the trains because there are so many of them in town. And trucks, too. I have no idea what's in our neighborhood or buzzing between states as far as the possibility of waste.*

*Hazardous materials spills: so many trains and containers going back and forth.*

*I also circled the hazmat spills. A few years ago there was a train wreck in Cassville. Of course it's hearsay but people say if you knew what was on some of those cars, or if you knew what was on some of those semis going by, it would make you wonder.*

### Contamination of food or water

*Contamination of food or water would be a concern for me. That's a good one with the bay and Lake Michigan right next to us.*

*The water raises my concern. The possibility of our water being contaminated.*

Local issues of water pollution caused some to highlight this item on the list. This was particularly true for those in Milwaukee.

*The Milwaukee Met sewage district. That's why I said water contamination.*

*They dump that sewage into the water - that's why water contamination was big on the list.*

## Emergency Preparedness

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### Participants have made few formal preparations for any of the disasters.

Wisconsin's residents aren't ready. Despite their concerns, participants had made few formal preparations for any of the possible disasters discussed. To be sure, a few had given considerable thought to the matter and were well prepared. They were a distinct minority. A second group had given some thought to what they would do in the event of some form of severe weather: retreat to the basement and wait out the storm. They may or may not have a flashlight and radio with them and they expect the emergency to be of short duration. Some have small stocks of food but these were not stored with an emergency in mind. A third group has given little thought to emergency preparedness and have done nothing to prepare.

### The more fully prepared

A few of the participants felt fully prepared. They had made plans and other concrete preparations for the emergencies they thought most likely. It's important to note the connection between emergency preparedness and profession suggested by the statements below. During the discussions we were repeatedly struck by the role a person's profession (or volunteering) played in forming his/her ideas.

*My husband is a former volunteer fire person and we have all these things in place and we know exactly where to meet. Except that the cat doesn't know. The batteries and all of these things. The food. The water gets changed every six months. The TV goes off with the tornado thing, I'm in the basement. No problem. I really take it seriously. I keep my eyes to the sky.*

*I think your state of preparedness is also a function of what you do for a living. For 13 years of my life I worked as a director of manufacturing for a company that built fire trucks. So I sat every single day with fire chiefs, so that molded and shaped me from a preparedness standpoint. Because it was driven into me that you need to be prepared.*

*We have a weather radio we keep on so any time the weather services warn us, at least of tornadoes or severe storms, we'll get alerted by that, and then some food stock in the basement. We have a plan for the family to go to the basement in the case of at least severe weather. [So you have kids at home?] Yep.*

### The less well prepared

*I have flashlights, batteries, food.*

*I have a radio. I know I have candles.*

*We kind of got some stuff down there with that [emergencies] in the back our mind.*

This statement typifies the thinking of many of the people in the groups.

*Just run. Go to the basement and wait it out.*

*I have no canned foods or anything down in the basement. They [wife and children] know what section of the basement to go to. Other than that, 'Have a good day, God bless you, and good luck.'*

## **The unprepared**

Others acknowledge that they are simply unprepared.

*I think about them [preparedness steps] but I don't do them.*

*It's a good idea but we'll do it tomorrow.*

*I think we've been told we should be doing something but I've been one of the nay sayers.*

The focus group discussion did cause some people to think about making a formal plan for their family.

*This meeting is great in terms of probably encouraging and forcing my wife and me to sit down and formalize a lot of things that are certainly floating around in my mind now. I don't think we're totally ignorant about what one might do but there is no real plan that's going to be necessarily followed.*

## **Children stimulate household emergency preparedness**

Children play an important role in a family's level of preparedness. Adults might not prepare for themselves but they will when they are responsible for children. Once the kids leave the house, however, then such preparations once again languish.

*I had prepared where I was going to go with my kids down into the basement. I purposely had a flashlight there and some snacks for the kids.*

*With the tornado warning this weekend my son said, 'We're going to die if the tornado comes.' I have to prepare them, explain the situation.*

*I have two children and we probably have no less than four different plans, depending on what occurs. If it's the weather, it's to the basement. If it's any type of radioactive or hazardous spill, it's grab the bottle of water from the basement, get in one of the cars that's always full of fuel, and head west. So we have several plans depending on whatever occurs.*

Children also bring pressure on parents to prepare.

*These past couple of days it was raining real bad and there was a lot of lightning and we were having tornadoes in Wisconsin so she [daughter] starting packing up everything. She said, 'Mommy, they said on TV that we can hide in the basement.' She started taking everything down to the basement: food, blankets, flashlights.*

*My kids learned about it [emergency preparedness] at school and they told me about it.*

Once the children leave the home preparedness lapses.

*When the kids were gone it was like 'no worries.'*

*We had drills. We'd see threatening skies and we'd go down. In Illinois, we'd go down to the basement with the kids. Like you say, once the kids are gone, who cares?*

*When we had kids at home you always had a plan of where to meet in case of a disaster. Now that the kids are gone, yeah, we probably still have that plan but do we think about it as much, probably not.*



## Duration of preparation

People may not be prepared for a long term emergency. They envision a short siege, not a long, drawn out or protracted event which might require more resources.

*I think you plan maybe for a couple hours. Downstairs ... I have the fire extinguisher and the flashlights and whatever, but I don't plan for days or anything longer.*

## Rationales for not preparing

During the discussions participants thought of many reasons for not being prepared. The following is a list of their reasons for “not getting ready.”

1. Until you've had the experience of a disaster you won't prepare or take precautions.

*It's like not wearing your seatbelt until you get a ticket. Then you start wearing your seatbelt.*

2. They think it just won't happen to them.

*I guess I would go for the category that most of the time it's somebody else. You don't think it's going to happen to you. That would be my thought.*

*Most people are going to say, 'I don't need to do that because it will not happen to me.' But if it does then they look back on it and say, 'Well, maybe I should of.' If they live through it.*

*I think it's human nature to think, 'It's not going to happen to me.'*

3. If they have experienced a disaster then they think it won't happen to them again.

*That was my reaction when the tornado came through. I never thought that would happen here. Now that it happened I thought, 'It will never happen again.'*

4. They don't want to worry or otherwise “live in fear.”

*There seems to be a tendency, especially associated with the seasons, that if you get over this and get over that, then you go, 'Well, I don't want to worry about that. I don't have to worry about that now.' There is a tendency to get tired of worrying about everything.*

*I wish I could be this well prepared but from there to waking up every day just afraid of something happening, life goes on and it will be going on for the next thousand years, and you've got to have a life and just go on with your business.*

*I just won't allow myself to live in fear. I just won't.*

5. Older people may feel less need to be prepared.

*I think gender and age have a lot to do with it. The older you get, I'm going to be 64 in November, the less you really worry about these things. I think younger people with kids have a tendency to be more prepared and more concerned about these things happening.*

*There's a lot of elderly around us who'd say, 'I've lived through it this long - 80 years - I don't have to worry about it. If they're going to take me, take me now...'*

*That's right. I've lived a full life.*



6. Gender may play a role. Some think women are more likely to take responsibility for making preparations.

*For a guy, it's a macho thing. 'I ain't going to worry about that.' Where a woman, she's got more common sense. A woman will take things more seriously than a guy does. I think because she's the caretaker for the family. You're always taking care of somebody and you feel like it would be your responsibility if something happened, if you didn't try every which way you could to prevent that.*

7. There are some disasters that individuals can prepare for and others that they can't. This gets at the notion of "personal efficacy." One person, for example, felt that there was little an individual could do to be personally prepared for an epidemic. In such situations they would be completely dependent upon others (i.e., medical professionals, county health departments, the government).

*In a natural disaster I would be able to help myself out. But if it was something like small pox or SARS, I would have to depend on someone else to help me in that situation. I have to depend on somebody to get me the vaccine and who knows when they could even get to me.*

**Note:** The person who had this insight was a medical professional.

8. Fatalism and / or faith.

*We're not going to live in fear. To trust that there is something bigger or better that's going to protect us, and if it's our time, it's our time.*

## Willingness to Prepare for an Emergency

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### **Participants acknowledge the need for being prepared and are willing to take steps for disaster preparedness.**

Although most participants have made few formal preparations for a disaster, that should not be interpreted as lack of recognizing the need for disaster preparedness nor unwillingness to prepare.

After reviewing a handout describing the four elements to disaster planning the participants recognized that there was a great deal more that they could and should do to prepare for both natural and man-made disasters. Further, the participants displayed a willingness to get ready for an emergency. In particular, participants were struck by the importance of knowing how to turn off their houses' water, gas and electricity; many mentioned talking to their family about contingency plans in case of an emergency.

*I never really considered the fact that something could happen to my husband in a natural disaster because I kind of assume that he'd be the one who would turn off the water and the gas and the electricity and things like that so I should probably figure that out. We've come to a conclusion on a plan but I never took the initiative to actually show me what to do here, that kind of thing, in our house.*

*Well, I live with my elderly mother and a lot of times I'm at work and she knows to go in the basement in case of bad weather but she doesn't know how to use the fire extinguisher, which we do have, so that's something. And I don't believe she knows where to turn off the water and the gas.*

*The one that did catch me off guard was the show other people how to turn off the gas, electricity and power and all that kind of stuff. I'm the only guy that knows how to do that now, so that's a probably good thing to do.*

*Well, the smoke detectors on each level of the home is important I would say. Emergency phone numbers is a good idea as far as I'm concerned. Escape routes - we went over that with our kids. We've got a story and a half so we kind of went over that. And first aid and CPR I think are important. And I am going to find out how to turn off the utilities because I do not know how to do that. Gas, water.*

Participants also acknowledged the necessity of knowing how to reach other family members in the event of a disaster.

*We have two daughters who are living in other areas and that's something that would be the biggest stressor if there is a large scale disaster of some kind, how to contact them most efficiently, so lots of stuff to address. This is going to be a nice starting point list if we can have a copy of it.*

*I think I checked almost everything...Gosh, having phone numbers and knowing to tell my kids where to meet us at the house or by the neighbor or a bunch of other stuff, honestly, I never thought of. So, there are several things that I could do.*

*I guess one thing I hadn't thought about is if you're not at home, and chances are if it's like 9/11 it happens during the day and we're both at work or different places and how would we contact each other? Where would we go if we couldn't go home and where would we meet? So, that's something that stood out.*

*Well, the one that concerns me the most is the workplace and school emergency response plans. If there's a tornado when I'm at work I know where to go and this and that. But the thing that always goes off in your mind is I'm at work, my kids are at school. You just want to take off and be with your kids. If there is going to be a disaster, if I'm going to die the last ones I want to be with are my kids, you know. That's a big thing to me.*

## Likelihood of a Terrorist Attack

### Most believe that there will be a terrorist attack in the U.S. in the next year.

Most participants are convinced that there will be a terrorist attack but it won't happen in their community and they are not at risk. They also don't think it will happen in the Midwest and they feel that Wisconsin is an unlikely target.

The Green Bay discussion was typical of participants' views of the likelihood of an attack (Table 6). The closer you get to their home, the less likely they are to feel that an attack will occur. To be sure, some think that an attack is unlikely anywhere while others think that their city could be a target.

**Table 6: Likelihood of terrorist attacks in the U.S. and Green Bay**

Participant	Likelihood of an attack in U.S.	Likelihood of an attack in Green Bay
1	100%	50%
2	100	40
3	100	0
4	100	0
5	100	0
6	100	0
7	25	0
8	0	0

### There will be an attack

*We're going to [have an attack]. We will. It's just a matter of time. I don't think in this area, like say a bomb or something like that. I'm thinking like Anthrax.*

*I think we could be hit. I think any area could be a target sometime.*

*They make us think that every day. It's all over the news. It's in every newspaper.*

*Yeah, maybe smallpox. There's things out there we don't even know about.*

### It will occur in a metropolitan area

*I would say it's going to happen in a bigger community like Orlando, in the Magic Kingdom. You've got thousands and thousands of people. Why would you mess with a couple hundred [in Park Falls] when you could kill a couple thousand? Like New York.*

### It could happen somewhere in the Midwest

*The Midwest is a big area and there are a lot of high concentration cities within the Midwest that I do think would be ideal for terrorist activity. Someone mentioned the Mall of America, absolutely, it's visible, it's big, there's a high concentration of people. But you asked about Green Bay. I don't see it happening here.*

### It's unlikely to happen in Wisconsin

*I just think they would hit more populated areas.*

*New York or LA would be the targets.*

*I agree with her. The base that we have here is small compared to some.*

*[What about Madison?] No. It's small. There's just not as much as there is in California or New York or Florida...*

## It won't happen in their community

Participants believe that terrorist attacks won't happen in a small community. Those from small and medium communities very much doubted that they were a target of terrorists. They feel that terrorists are much more likely to target population centers and/or symbols of this country.

**Note:** See the *New York Times* article: "CIA Sends Terror Experts to Tell Small Towns of Risks" (7/18/2004).

*We're way up here. We don't have to worry about it. I wouldn't worry that much about a terrorist strike up here.*

*Why would a terrorist want to come here? There isn't anything really big out here.*

*I feel the same way. We're a small town. Why would they want to come here with nothing major close by? If there was something governmental...*

*Pragmatics come into play. If I lived in Washington my alertness would be far higher than if I'm living in Green Bay, simply because I tend to think logically and I think terrorists tend to think logically, too. They're not going to invest all this activity to explode something in Green Bay with a population where it is and not necessarily an impact for the U.S.*

## A natural disaster is more likely than a terrorist attack

*When I look at any sort of catastrophic event, or the potential of a catastrophic event, I have to equate it to where I live and say, 'I'm probably more threatened by a natural disaster, simply because of the area that I live in and what kind of natural disasters can occur,' than I would be that, 'I'm afraid that someone's going to spike my food supply.'*

## Possible targets

Upon reflection, however, most participants could think of targets that are nearby and that might make their community an incidental target. Residents in Lancaster, for example, noted their proximity to Chicago as well as possible targets along the Mississippi River.

*The power plants. The Dairyland [plant] is there and there is Aliant.*

*We're out here in the middle of nowhere but yet we're only three hours from Chicago - which could spread easily I think.*

*I think by some of our power plants in La Crosse. They are so guarded now and before we never would have thought about it.*

*If I was going to be a terrorist I'd have a big bomb and use it on a dam at Prescott and start the domino effect of the pools starting to drain [on the Mississippi River].*

*I mean you've got nuclear plants close by, you've got Milwaukee which is a port, Green Bay has a port. You don't know what can happen and it could happen in our backyard and I think we should be prepared.*

*Then there's project ELF [as a target]. Who knows what's going on up there? I think of that a lot.*

## Wisconsin's Readiness

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### **Many doubt that state or local governments are prepared for a bio-terror attack.**

Residents have little information about the steps that state or local governments have taken to get ready for an attack. They doubt that government is ready.

#### **Local preparedness**

They believe there is little local preparedness.

*In respect to bio-terrorism I don't think that anybody is prepared...How do you prepare for something you don't know what's going to happen?*

*Let me say this, I always have to be honest, people are going somewhere else for even their health care. [Outside of Park Falls you mean?] Oh yeah. Big time. I'm sorry to say that so how could we ever be prepared?*

*The public health department is probably looking at it the way we are and thinking like it probably won't happen to us so maybe they aren't as prepared.*

#### **Preparedness at the state level**

Participants doubt that the state is ready to cope with such an attack.

*I don't think we're ready. I don't think we are. Nobody will ever be ready for that no matter how prepared. You'll never be prepared. But 9/11 woke us up.*

*Maybe it's because I'm new to Wisconsin but I don't really see us being prepared.*

*I kind of think we're not prepared. I don't think we're as prepared as we might hope. I'm thinking bio-terror.*

*This is sort of a remote area so...the state is not ready for bio-terrorism.*

You can't know how prepared you are until something actually happens.

*I don't think you know how prepared you are until something happens. You can train, train, train but you don't know until something happens.*

If the state couldn't cope with the annual flu season how could it cope with a bio-terrorist attack?

*Seems like every year they're saying, 'Okay, we want young kids and elderly people to come in but everybody else don't come because we have a low supply.' I think we hear more about that than we're ever told about bio-terrorism.*

*Because they're not ready with any medication or tetanus shots for the amount of people there are just in the Wisconsin area. They didn't have enough for the flu at the time so how do you know they're going to have enough of that?*

*They don't have enough for smallpox. I remember they talked about giving all the soldiers smallpox shots...but they wouldn't have enough for the country.*

People on the fringes of the health care system (such as the poor and minorities) fear that they might be left out in the event of an emergency. This concern was voiced by Hispanics in Milwaukee.

*If there was an outbreak none of us here have a chance of getting that shot. Whoever has the money can get that shot.*

*Who's got more or better insurance? If you don't have insurance they don't care. Whatever is left over will go to them. That's not fair.*

This person, who works in a hospital, has a more positive view of the state's preparedness.

*I think it depends where you work. Where I work at the hospital - I think the state is prepared for stuff like that because they are constantly having us going to orientations, having to do bio-terrorism drills. We're all up to date on that, and we all know what's going on so I think it's pretty much where you work.*

## **Individual responsibility**

Individuals do have some responsibility to take steps to prepare. Note that only one person in all the groups formally voiced this view.

*Each individual has to have some part in this, too. And if we're not willing to do any of this [holds up list of preparedness actions] why should we have to have other people doing other things, too. There's accountability.*



## Information Needs

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### **Residents need more information on the state's level of preparedness.**

In order to have greater confidence in the state's readiness, participants need to be informed. They equate a lack of information with a low level of preparedness. In Green Bay, for example, the group met across the hallway from the Bio-terrorism Consortium but none had ever seen or heard anything about this consortium. In the minds of these participants this lack of visibility translates into a belief that the state is unprepared.

*I say lack of visibility. Frankly, if you ask me I'd say nothing is being done. I don't hear about it, I don't see it. The fact that we've got a bio-terrorist kind of room across the way here [referring to the Bio-Terrorism Consortium of Lake Michigan], and I don't know anything about it. I'd say lack of visibility, lack of awareness of it. It may be happening but I'd tell you as far as I'm concerned it's not.*

*I think state and local has dropped the ball in this case. There are some pretty significant players around the table here that work in businesses and in the community here. Actually, I didn't know that was next door, bio-terrorism office, and probably the only way we would have found out it was there is if something occurred, and then it's too late.*

*[Does it surprise you to learn that there's that kind of office in Green Bay?] It doesn't really surprise me. The lack of publicity probably surprises me more because I think that's where you dropped the ball, I think someone dropped the ball by not publicizing that. And it's going to take an event for everyone to know it's here. Then all of a sudden it's going to be, 'Oh, my goodness, now what?'*

More information on emergency preparedness would lead them to believe that the state was taking precautions. When asked, "What would you need to know to feel that Wisconsin is ready?" responses included:

*I need information and education coming out of the state.*

*That should be the state's responsibility: to inform the public [about preparedness].*

*We don't get anything. This is the first time I've heard anything about public health. This is the first time I've heard anything about being prepared.*

## Sources of Information for Health Emergencies and Terrorist Attacks

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### Participants would turn to a variety of sources for health and terrorist information.

A single source was not dominant for information on health emergencies and terrorist attacks. Rather the participants discussed a number of sources they would turn to for emergency information. Some groups volunteered their local health office as their preferred information source; other groups never mentioned their local health office.

#### Information sources

In the event of a terrorist attack or a health emergency participants said they would likely turn to the following sources for information:

- Local police department
- The University of Wisconsin-Extension
- Primary physician
- Local hospitals
- Family in the medical profession

*Mine would probably be my brother. He's in the medical profession in Milwaukee so if I'm ever concerned about anything at all I call him.*

- The local public health office

*You go to the Grant County nurse and someone would have at least a contact and know where to go... as a teacher, that's where I, if I have any questions I always call there, the Grant County health department.*

- The County Courthouse

*I would definitely go the courthouse if I had any questions because they've been good. Any questions you want to know, the Price County Courthouse is there to give you an answer.*

- The Internet

*I would go to the Internet if I knew where to go...the sites...because you can search for a bunch of different things, but I would go to the Internet even though I wouldn't have the foggiest idea where to start, especially if it was a local event. I have no idea.*

- Local media (including television news, newspapers and news radio)

*The local media like the news channel or the newspaper. Channel 5, FOX. I would trust what they were telling us. I guess that's it.*



## **The far north**

For the group in northern Wisconsin, the meeting location farthest removed from state government, the discussion of where the participants would turn to for information about a terrorist attack evolved into a discussion of public trust of their government. To anticipate, Park Falls' residents trust their local government; the same cannot be said for the state or federal government.

Participants were asked if they trusted the government to provide accurate and useful information. Most appeared to have a high degree of trust for their local (county) government. Trust in the state and federal government was not as high.

*The Price County Courthouse isn't like the government. They're not going to postpone you, as the government will say, 'Well, I'll get back to you.'*

*Why would we trust the government? Sometimes even the state government doesn't know that we're up here, so...[Is that okay?] Not really. There is life up above Highway 8. It's forgotten a lot, political campaigns, everything is forgotten.*

The participants clearly feel a disconnect between their level of trust and the government.

*The government has no common connection to us anymore. It used to. [State or federal?] All of it. But not anymore*

*What really helps is if you know somebody who knows somebody. What helped me was I was living in Mellen and [name] was the representative and I knew her and...otherwise who would you contact? Unless you know someone...*

*When you think of yourself as I live in Park Falls, I'm just myself. I don't go and have lunches with the representatives and I'm not on a campaign committee and this and that. You go down and you see the Capitol, you're just on the outside. So you don't feel like you're part of it.*

## Visibility of Public Health Offices

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### **Participants do not associate the Department of Public Health with emergency preparedness.**

The groups had different opinions of their local public health offices. Some spoke highly of their local public health office; others had less favorable comments and still others had no familiarity with their local office. Most of the participants did not associate the Department of Public Health with information on preparedness for bio-terrorism.

### **The local public health office is not very visible in their communities**

Most participants said the public health office does not receive much exposure. When asked about the visibility of the local public health office in their communities a typical response was the office “doesn’t have much visibility here that I can tell.” Some of the more telling comments include:

*I think what actually should happen is the Public Health Department needs to promote themselves as a resource and they ought to have a website you can go to or that you should call them for this stuff...I’m thinking that public health is one of those things that, based on our current state of the world, it needs to be out there so people know who to call when they have questions about this.*

*It’s been my experience since I’ve been here that you really only learn about departments as you need them. You’re aware that they exist but I don’t think you bother calling them unless there’s a reason to call them...But until you actually need something, at least in this community, I don’t know if it’s unique to this community, unless you actually need something you wouldn’t necessarily need to be aware of it unless you needed to be aware of it, if that makes any sense.*

*I think in my personal life, my home life, I’ve never even considered the fact of public health. I just assume that I can only use [the Public Health office] for my professional use.*

For some participants, personal health insurance eliminates their need for public health.

*I guess because I have my own private health insurance I would go through my own doctor and clinic. I don’t deal with public health on a regular basis so I wouldn’t go to them.*

*I think we’re kind of taught when we’re young, when we have a problem we go to the doctor. We call the doctor and talk to the doctor and we see the doctor and we get regular physicals. We’re never taught, ‘Let’s go talk to the health department to see what they say.’ There’s never been a time in the schools where they do a field trip down to the health department to see what they do down there.*

**Note:** At the conclusion of the group another participant told us that she thought public health was primarily for poor people who lack health insurance and not for people (like herself) who have insurance.

As the Department of Public Health relates to bio-terrorism, this person's comment is indicative of most participants: they would not initially turn to the Public Health office for information about bio-terrorism.

*I wonder if you would look at the Public Health office for one type of disaster versus another? Let's say it's tuberculosis spreading in the area. You may more likely go to a Public Health office versus bio-terrorism. But if we had such an event, if it were pneumonia or tuberculosis or some other pandemic type of event I would probably seek out Public Health. But if it was bio-terrorism and if the media publicized it as bio-terrorism I probably wouldn't think about contacting Public Health. I would think about contacting some other authority that may be a police authority or something along those lines because I would perceive that as a criminal act and it may be treated differently.*

To be fair, most of the participants were aware of their local public health office, but many knew very little about its functions.

*Do they take care of public immunizations because I think that's where I've heard of them? ... Yes. West Nile stories.*

*They do vaccinations, flu shots, you can even take mercury thermometers to them.*

*They have well-testing...and WIC.*

*When you have a baby they send a public health nurse to your home for a little home visit and weigh the baby and check the baby.*

*I knew about it but never felt that there was a need to contact them.*

*I'm actually the director of my preschool and we need to call them when a certain type of disease comes about, obviously not sore throats but more of like Hepatitis C, things like that. [So you report to them if some...] We have to, we're licensed, we have to do that.*

In Milwaukee, the Department of Public Health seemed to have a fairly high profile in the minds of the participants. They associate the Department of Public Health with restaurant inspections or water quality monitoring, not with emergency preparedness or bio-terrorism.

*Going after people who don't have clean restaurants.*

*What you hear on the news. You hear a lot about them when you hear about the sewage dumping in Lake Michigan and in the rivers...And then you hear about them investigating stuff like that.*

## How the Emergency Preparedness Guide could be Prepared

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### Participants offered numerous suggestions for preparing a guide for emergency preparedness.

Throughout the discussions the participants offered their suggestions on how to prepare a guide for emergency preparedness. Their suggestions were numerous and offered in a “we’re all in this together” spirit. What follows is an inventory of their suggestions.

#### Make the Guide eye-catching

Participants thought the Guide could be more visually attractive. Adding pictures to the cover and color throughout the Guide would make it visually stimulating. (It should be noted, however, that the participants reviewed black and white photocopies while the original draft Guide included some color.)

*I like a visual, something that says, ‘Don’t throw me away.’...Pictures will get my attention more than words will...A picture would probably work a bit better than just this, than just the text [of the Wisconsin draft guide].*

*I need more of a visual stimulation to get my attention. A little color. I have something about color, even like a highlighter with yellow or something, though.*

*Color is important...I’d like a better cover page and with color to stand out, an eye catcher.*

*I feel like there should be red somewhere - when I saw it in blue it was a more calming thing which makes me not think emergency. I was thinking if you were really going to do this for emergency I’d have red in all of those spots where you have blue or black because you want to catch our eye and clouds - that’s not emergency - that’s calm.*

*There needs to be something bold. Maybe a tornado that would make me think emergency.*

*Something scary. Something that makes you think, ‘You better read this. Your family’s life depends on your reading this.’*

The participants referred to other emergency guides (used as visual prompts) that appealed to them.

*It should catch the eye so that when they look at it they see that it’s something they should read and they want to read. I particularly like that one because it draws your attention to it [referring to the Pennsylvania guide]. It has good color to it. The color draws you. It reminded me when I first looked at it, it reminded me of the civil defense, the old triangle.*

*That one’s not bad. [Referring to the Pennsylvania guide.] I was going to say that because of the color and it kind of grabs you to see what’s going on inside of it... The flashlight is great...That would say, ‘Well, there’s some information in there that I want to read.’*

*I think the seal on there makes a difference. [Referring to the Homeland Security guide.] It makes it more official.*

## Stay focused

The Guide should stay focused on a topic (such as emergency preparedness or health issues) rather than attempt to cover too many topics.

*There are so many different issues in this newsletter that I might pick out the one that's most interesting but it wouldn't necessarily be the most useful. The influenza epidemic in 1918 is interesting but it's not really going to make me any more ready than I am now and I do think that whenever you do a guide that covers every possible disaster it dilutes its effectiveness.*

*I don't know if it's even possible but just to send out a theme, like 'Are you ready for the flu, are you ready for bio-terrorism?' on separate occasions because there's no way anyone is going to think about all this all at once so why not give them one topic to really think about, kind of conquer in their own way and then get another one to think about and talk about.*

*It says 'Emergency Preparedness Guide' and then I started reading through it, and taken off track by good information that had nothing to do with what I was expecting.*

## Make the Guide a reference for useful information

Some thought the Guide should be more of a reference than an interesting communication.

*I actually need something concrete that I can see as useful for reference that I can grab if I needed it.*

*Something that you can kind of carry away with you...that shows you a checklist for emergency supplies or along those lines...You can check a website and you can download or print your list or something along those lines that's a reference for me, that's something of value to me.*

*I think one of things on here would be to add a list of things, 'If this happens this is who you call,' kind of thing because we never know, do you call the Department of Health, do you call the police department? We just call the police because they'll tell us what to do. If there's a tornado and a tree falls, do you call the Department of Health or, that kind of thing.*

In particular the participants suggested the Guide should include a listing of local contacts and their telephone numbers.

*One thing I would suggest is to have a list of public health departments in each county so that people can say, 'This is who I get a hold of.' So you have your local contact.*

*The health and safety information I think should be in local numbers rather than state and national.*

*I always like addresses and phone numbers right at my disposal so I'm not wondering who do you think I should call? I like that this is all here.*

## The Guide should be kept short

*Keep it short...This was way too long and it's all text. This was more like a book than a quick guide to help.*

## Specific comments about the Guide's format

Participants gave the Guide their considerable attention. This resulted in very specific suggestions on the Guide's presentation format.

Some feel that the masthead is too busy.

*The one thing you're going to have to overcome first is you've got to get people to pick it up... It's too busy! There's too many things on that whole border there and I can't even hardly make that out. There's clouds there.*



Keep the articles continuous rather than jumping from one page to another.

*I am a big fan of reading page to page instead of fishing around because, 'Go to page 4', I was like, 'Oh no, what's this question?' kind of thing and by that time I forgot what I was reading about. [So you're talking about the broken format?] Yes. And that's something that's easy to fix.*

*It should be laid out differently, a better format...You go from page one and 'Are you ready?' - then it's continued on page four. Why in the world didn't it continue on the second page?*

*I thought that [the article breaks] was a little distracting because there are so many articles that you're trying to put in here and then you break them up and I think they're already broken up so much with these little boxes stuck everywhere.*

*The jumping around needs to be fixed...I showed my wife, and she deals with elderly people and she said you're going to lose them because they won't jump around. They want to go right in order.*

Changing the font in specific places would make the information more prominent.

*When I looked at this and saw the question marks on there I thought there should be something else there. [You're talking about the banners of 'Did You Know?'] Correct. And sometimes I think these kinds of things maybe should have a different font that would stand out a little more.*

*The titles or even the 'Fish are fun to catch and good to eat' and maybe the reminder underneath should be italicized or something just to make it stand out a little more.*

*I had penciled a note to myself to pick a different kind of font. A sans serif with block letters rather than the curlicues. And increase the font to size 12. I'm envisioning my 70-something old mother trying to read this kind of an article, because senior citizens will be interested in influenza...*

Provide more space to record emergency numbers.

*My mother-in-law does not write nice and neat and when you leave only a little bit of single spacing between your emergency information on page eight, I have down, 'Please enlarge the print and leave plenty more space' - you can shrink up who it's written by and published and paid for and move things down giving us more space up here so the above write in space has more room for writing.*

*Increase the spacing between things because of mother's nervous hand, she doesn't write as clear as she once did. If she takes the time to fill it in I can at least read it.*

Some of the graphics could be improved.

*A little smaller graphics. We don't have to have this big picture of kissing. And a little more modern of a telephone. I know I lived in the dial it up era but ...*

Move the "Did you know" notes from the middle of a story to the end of the column and/or shade them in gray.

*They kind of confused you because they didn't pertain to what you were reading. You were reading and all of a sudden you got broken up with this new thing. And then you got to continue reading.*

*As an art teacher I would say if those would have been a little bit gray that would have helped.*

Make some minor corrections to the titles of certain articles.

*I also think too, the article titles, I'd still do it like an article in a newspaper. In a paper you have capital A, capital Y, capital R. Otherwise it's a sentence. I didn't think of it as a sentence but as a title. That would be something else. The rest of them you did do that. They have the beginning letter capitalized. Just the 'Are you ready?' and 'Can you guess?'*

## Suggestions for Alternative Distribution Methods

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### **Participants offered numerous suggestions for alternate ways of distributing the Guide to the public.**

Participants had mixed reactions to the method of distributing the guide through local newspapers and *Shopper Stoppers*. Some participants (mainly in Park Falls) liked the idea of a newspaper distribution, saying, "It's a good idea. It's a good way to distribute it, through the *Shopper Stoppers* and through newspapers...Most of us get a paper." Many, however, thought there were better or alternative methods for drawing public attention to the Guide.

### **A direct mailing from the state would likely entice a person to read the Guide**

*I think it would make a difference if it was mailed to me...You know, 'To the resident from the State of Wisconsin.' Chances are I'd look at that but something inserted in the newspaper, assuming I get the newspaper, no chance.*

*If something like this came to me in the mail from the state I would look at it. I'd page through it. I might not read it all but I'd look through it.*

*I'd be more apt to read it if it came in the mail.*

### **Make the Guide available to captive audiences; waiting lines and reception rooms are ideal locations for distribution**

*Where I would read these and spend the time basically is when I'm standing in line at the airport or sitting in the airport terminal. If these buggers were lying around in an area where you're bored and you don't know what to do with yourself I'd probably pick it up.*

*Or the doctor's office when you're waiting.*

*If I was going up and down in an elevator in a government office and it had a 'Did you know?' I'd be standing there in that elevator going up, I would be reading it in an elevator. I'm a captive audience, bored at the time, looking for something to do other than stare at the mirror in front of me.*

*When some of us go to the Department of Transportation to renew our license they have a lot of brochures there. I've got to wait 45 minutes there. You try to get what appeals to your eyesight and that's what you guys should do and then you pick it up because you want to read it.*

### **Other suggestions included the Internet and public and private organizations likely to have an interest in "crisis response plans"**

*Possibly a link from a local television station to the Internet, a direct link. Go on there and say, 'Link to this' and then you can download whatever you want.*

*There are a lot of public and private organizations that are required now to have crisis response plans. People who are doing crisis response plans are reporting that since they are known as the person doing that, they are getting a lot of questions that involve these issues. So, having them have this information or guide would be real helpful because they're becoming a referral resource for this...I know colleges are required to have them...You're kind of looking for a responsible unit, other than just throwing this into the ocean of public opinion but to have a responsible unit like a workplace or an educator.*

*If possible, in another month or two, neighborhood watches are getting together. That would be an appropriate time and probably get a good distribution.*

One group thought that high school students could distribute the Guide. The students could then report this volunteer activity on their resumes.

*Volunteerism would be helpful. I know kids in high school are always looking for things to do to get on their resume...The seniors, volunteering their hours could walk door to door.*

### **Announce the Guide prior to its public release**

Integral to the Guide's distribution methods, a few participants suggested that announcing the Guide in advance of its distribution would "spark some interest" and entice people to look for the Guide.

*What I would do is, I would put some announcement, maybe if you could get some PSAs on radio stations saying this is coming, to look for this or even in the local newspapers, saying this is going to be distributed and this is how we're going to do it. 'Look for this piece,' that it might spark some interest. [Unanimous agreement among the participants.]*

*I would say trump this up somehow prior to the paper, somehow build to it.*

*Could you do some kind of a buildup a week before, a couple days before, this thing is in the paper? Have an article in the paper that says, 'Are you ready? Watch for your emergency preparedness guide. It's coming.' And then we'll be more likely to go, 'Oh, this is it!'*

### **Utilize the public's desire for a free product**

To truly draw public attention to emergency preparedness, some participants suggested using a refrigerator magnet or wallet card printed with pertinent information. These suggestions were offered in several groups.

*...have you ever gotten something in the mail, let's say a little magnet is on the top, say the size of that cookie? You're going to feel that. You're not going to throw it away right away because there's something in there. If you get something and you feel it before you go to throw it away, it's going to make you open it. That's the key, to open it...Put it in the paper. Have it just like this, but you know with that rubber cement glue, just the size so that even one or two numbers will fit.*

*A magnet...So that they could peel it off, put it right on the refrigerator. That's going to get you to want to open it because there is something in the inside.*

*If I got a mailing that had a plasticized list of, like West Nile Virus [information], this or that, what you do about these things, I would keep that.*

*When I got through CPR many years ago we had this little wallet card. I'm just thinking a card that we could get where we have the website, some pertinent things, maybe localized, what are the emergency numbers for a given locale and somehow get those things out.*



## Reactions to the Focus Groups

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### Participants enjoyed the discussions.

At the conclusion of each focus group the participants were asked for their opinions about the previous two hours - what they thought of the format, their comfort level, and their willingness to participate in additional discussions if needed.

Comments were all positive. The participants enjoyed the discussion and most important, they appreciated being invited into the process and contributing to the development of an important communication piece. Quotations from two participants are indicative of the groups' general feelings.

*I was excited that I was chosen to be a part of this. I found it very interesting...I felt that if I could help somebody else or if this step could further bring our community in helping in some way then I don't feel like I wasted my time.*

*I enjoyed myself. I love to give my opinion so, whether anybody wants to hear it or not... I thought it was well worth it and I'd do it again.*

It's worth noting that some participants, now feeling vested in the process, recommended a post-distribution evaluation of the Guide's outreach and utility.

*How useful was it [the Guide], did we reach as many people as we wanted to, did everybody keep it or did they take it and throw it away? Did it get them to think about, 'Am I ready? Are there things I need to be doing to do this?'*

*If you get feedback from people you may have to make another one.*

*I think it's a good starting point where it's probably going to create more questions down the road. You need to know that. You can get so much info flowing out there at one time that you can't absorb it all... That's why I'm wondering if it was coming out again so there could be follow up information.*

## Appendix

The table below presents a simple count of the specific concerns highlighted by four groups.

**Table A1: Listing of significant concerns by discussion group**

Concern	La Crosse	Lancaster	Green Bay	Park Falls	Total
<b>Natural disasters</b>					
Tornadoes	3	7	6	7	23
Winter storms	7	6	4	6	23
Severe weather	5	6	5	6	22
Power outages	6	5	5	3	19
Flash floods	3	3	1	3	10
Wildfires	1	2	1	1	5
Hurricanes			3		3
Earthquakes			2		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Other disasters</b>					
Contamination food or water	5	7	4	4	20
Hazardous materials spills	4	5	4	1	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Health emergencies</b>					
West Nile virus	4	4	6	4	18
Mad cow disease	2	3	3	5	13
Influenza	3	6	4		13
SARS	3	3	4	1	11
Avian flu	1	1	2		4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Terrorism</b>					
Radioactive or hazardous materials release	4	6	5	5	20
Bombs	2	5	4	2	13
Anthrax	1	5	3	3	12
Poison gas	2	6	3		11
Airplane hijacking	2	2	4	1	9
Smallpox	2	1	3	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>72</b>